

Letter from Mabel Hubbard Bell to Alexander Graham Bell, June 9, 1895, with transcript

Letter from Mrs. Alexander Graham Bell to Dr. Alexander Graham Bell. Paris. 10 rue Nitot. June 9, 1895. My darling Alec:

I don't know that I have more than a good morning to send you today, but I love you.

Your letters haven't told me anything yet of your life. Who is waiting on you? How many servants have you? Are you properly looked after? Do you get enough sleep? Please remember my dear that I care for your physical well being as well as your mental status. I have written by this mail to ask Mr. McCurdy how our finances stand. It seems to me your expenses ought not to be as much this summer as they were last winter and that therefore we shall not suffer from this trip abroad. I hope you haven't got the steam launch again. I don't see what you want it for when you never go in it and it is awfully expensive, as much as all the money you have given me to live on here for four months. I don't complain. I think it is enough, but I don't see why you should spend the same amount on a boat you never use and which you don't need. Let's both be as economical as we can this year that we may have the great Christmas present of seeing both ends meet. By the way Mamma's Golden Wedding comes this fall and we shall want to give her and Papa something nice. Please don't forget this.

Miss Duncan has taken the children to the Bois de Boulogne to see the carriages return from the races. This is the great day of Paris, the day of the "Grand Prix", and the President has driven 2 to the race course in a coach and six with scarlet outriders. I rather wish now that I had gone with them, but it was warm this morning and I was tired after attending both the Catholic mass and the Prysbyterian service and having to walk home up-hill in the hot sun. I was disappointed to find the mass was only low mass so neither children or nuns were dressed up. The children simply wore their white veils over their

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ordinary blue dresses and the careful nuns let down their purple skirts which ordinarily they wear pinned up and took off their black alpaca working aprons. It was very pretty nevertheless to see the children enter the dainty, white-walled, flower decorated chapel, two by two, kneel before the high altar and then march on to their seats, the little ones first and the tallest last, until the whole chapel was filled with kneeling white veiled figures. The children, mine I mean, think it would be dreadful to be regular pupils here. They say the regime is for the children all to sleep in one large dormitory under charge of some of the nuns. They rise at half-past six, breakfast at quarter past seven, then comes mass in the chapel and school at half-past eight. Before the commencement of every lesson the children cross themselves and say a prayer. Recess comes from 12 to 1½, dejeuner at 11, then more studies, sometimes out of doors in the garden, twenty minutes play at seven and to bed after prayer at eight. The children are never left alone for a moment, hardly allowed to go from one room to the other without at least an "Enfante de Marie" with them, this child of Mary being an upper class high merit girl, who wears a distinctive white ribbon badge. They are not allowed to talk except during 3 recess and are hardly capable of doing the first thing for themselves, Blanche Emory told Elsie. These benighted little creatures however instead of rebelling against the strictness with which they are brought up are perfectly happy, and Daisy says "flare up" if you say the least thing against the convent. I should think this quiet, regular, eventless life must be very good for children and prevent much of the nervous strain and excitement to which American children are exposed. Perhaps if Elsie had been educated in a convent, say from the time she was eight years old, she would have escaped the chores.

The photographer says all my cardboard is of no use for photographs. It is too thin so I must get some more. What shall I do with my two hundred sheets? They make a pretty big and heavy parcel, yet it seems a pity to throw away this good paper.

Elsie continues much pleased with her music teacher. She says she keeps giving her exactly the same directions you do. For instance the last lesson she made Elsie play her own accompaniment, saying that if others played she would never know where she was.

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She told Elsie yesterday that she had a beautiful voice that only needed to be let out. Elsie is very much pleased and very ambitious to improve and I hope you will not be ashamed of either of your children. But I fear it is true neither has your genius for hard work. I don't see though why your children and mine shouldn't be as remarkable as your Father and Mother's!

I have not done any reading to speak of. I have been trying to read French and have more respect for my children's knowledge of that language when I see how easily they can read what I find so 4 incomprehensible. They really seem to like reading French and that means that they understand it. Yet they can't get out of the idea that I know more than they and both turn to me in any difficulty and want me to help them out with a word or an explanation! And I very often can help them, strange as it may seem. Elsie looked very pretty this afternoon. She has a black silk skirt and a pink silk waist which is very becoming. But it looks like rain now. I hope they will get home safely with their fine feathers unharmed.

There is an exhibition now in progress of horseless carriages and in a few days there is going to be a race of them from Paris to Bordeaux and back. Steam petroleum and electricity are the means of impulsion used and they are not to be repaired during the journey except by such simple means as the drivers themselves can employ. I have seen one or two of these carriages in use about the streets and they are for sale at prices ranging from \$2000.00 for an ordinary two-wheeled carriage to 900 francs for a bicycle.

Goodbye for today. Write to me as often as you can. I watch for your letters and am always hungry when the bright friendly little concierge comes up with my Daily Telegraph and no letter from you.

Lovingly, Mabel.